

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY / MIDDLE EAST UPDATE
July 15 - 22, 2010

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1. Clinton Announces New Sanctions Against North Korea (07-21-2010)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States will strengthen existing economic sanctions and impose new restrictions against North Korea over its nuclear weapons program and its recent unnecessarily provocative actions, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says.

Clinton said a shift in North Korea's behavior could improve its security and the international respect it seeks. The North could have a peace treaty, normal relations with the United States and an end to sanctions — if it would cease “its provocative behavior, halt its threat and belligerence toward its neighbors, take irreversible steps to fulfill its denuclearization commitments and comply with international law,” Clinton told reporters.

“If North Korea chooses that path, sanctions will be lifted, energy and other economic assistance will be provided, its relations with the United States will be normalized and the current armistice on the peninsula will be replaced by a permanent peace agreement,” Clinton said at a July 21 press conference in Seoul.

Clinton and Defense Secretary Robert Gates toured the Demilitarized Zone, which has separated North and South Korea since July 1953, when the Korean War ended in a truce. They were in South Korea for talks with Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan and National Defense Minister Kim Tae-young in the first “2-plus-2” talks held between U.S. and South Korean ministers.

When President Obama entered office 18 months ago, he offered to hold diplomatic talks with North Korea to encourage North Korean negotiators to resume the Six-Party Talks, which were designed to convince the North to forgo a nuclear weapons and long-range missile development program, Clinton told reporters. The Six-Party Talks are led by China and include Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Russia and the United States.

“Following the attack on the South Korean naval vessel Cheonan, I think it’s particularly timely to show our strong support for South Korea, a stalwart ally, and to send a very clear message to North Korea,” Clinton said. The sanctions are specifically designed to “target their leadership, target their assets.”

The new sanctions announced July 21 target the sale or purchase of arms and related materials used to fund North Korea’s nuclear weapons development program and the acquisition of luxury items for the ruling elite. While the specifics of the sanctions are still being worked out, Clinton said they would also target North Korean counterfeiting, money laundering and other financial activities that are used by the regime to raise hard currency to pay off its allies and to maintain control of the isolated communist nation bordered by China, Russia and South Korea.

The visit by Clinton and Gates to the Demilitarized Zone, which marks the sole remaining Cold War-era border, was part of ceremonies to mark the 60th anniversary of the start of the Korean War, in which South Korea, the United States and allies fought an attempt by the North to invade the South in a three-year conflict that ended in a truce, but not a peace. There are approximately 2 million combat troops stationed along the four-kilometer-wide zone that separates the two countries on the Korean Peninsula.

2-PLUS-2 TALKS

The 2-plus-2 talks signal the long-standing strength of the U.S.-South Korean relationship formed in the aftermath of the Korean War. The talks included security issues in Northeast Asia, the U.S.-South Korean alliance and economic relations. The administration of former President George W. Bush and then the Obama administration have worked to obtain passage of the Korean Free Trade Agreement in Congress, but negotiations are still being held.

An international inquiry found that a North Korean torpedo, fired from a small submarine, sank a South Korean warship, the Cheonan, as it patrolled in open waters March 26, killing 46 sailors. The U.N. Security Council issued a presidential statement condemning the sinking of the naval vessel, saying that the sinking of the Cheonan posed a grave threat to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and the Northeast Asian region. The United Nations also maintains sanctions against the North Korean regime.

Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell said that since the sinking of the Cheonan the United States and South Korea have been engaged in high-level consultations to devise additional ways to bolster alliance capabilities and improve regional stability. Combined military exercises were discussed during the 2-plus-2 talks, including new naval and air exercises in both the Sea of Japan and the Yellow Sea.

Clinton said part of the reason for their visit to Seoul was to show continued solidarity with South Korea in the face of North Korean belligerence. Gates told reporters that their mission was intended “to send a strong signal to the North, to the region and to the world that our commitment to South Korea’s security is steadfast.”

These military exercises are planned to augment already planned exercises with elements of the U.S. and South Korean armed forces, Morrell said. “All of these exercises are defensive in nature, but will send a clear message of deterrence to North Korea.”

U.S. and South Korean officials will also discuss a plan agreed to by President Obama and South Korean President Lee Myung-bak that will transfer wartime operational control of forces on the Korean Peninsula to South Korea by December 2015. The transfer had been scheduled for April 2012.

2. Clinton Says Pakistan Showing Greater Commitment Against Terror (07-21-2010)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The Pakistani government has become “very serious” about fighting the violent extremist organizations within its borders, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says, and while there is more work to be done she envisions greater cooperation between the United States and Pakistan against terrorist groups as more trust is built between the two governments.

Clinton spoke with several reporters who traveled with her July 18 to Islamabad, where she led a U.S. delegation for a meeting with Pakistani officials as part of the U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue.

She told CBS’s Maria Usman that Pakistani officials have reached their own conclusion that terror organizations, which have targeted innocent Pakistani civilians, are seeking to undermine the Pakistani state, and over the past 18 months they have made “the extraordinary commitment of military assets against different terrorist groups that we now see.”

“The horrific attacks on religious shrines and mosques and markets and so many places where people are just going about their daily lives illustrates the approach that these terrorist groups are taking. It’s very much against Pakistan,” Clinton said. The Pakistani government “has become very serious about fighting terrorism within their own borders and working with Afghanistan and the United States to try to stabilize the region.”

Despite recent terror operations undertaken by al-Qaida affiliates in Somalia and Yemen, “the brain center and the operational planning” of the organization still exist in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Clinton told Greta Van Susteren of Fox News that Pakistani cooperation has enabled the United States to “track and kill a lot of al-Qaida’s principal leadership” and said she believes the Obama administration has also moved closer to capturing or killing Osama bin Laden or al-Qaida’s second in command, Ayman al-Zawahiri.

“We have been able to kill a number of their trainers, their operational people, their financiers. We’ve been able to do that, so in that sense we have gotten closer. But I won’t be satisfied till we get it done,” she said.

Although Pakistani security forces and civilians are paying a huge price through violence and loss of life due to the terrorist networks in their country, in cooperating against terrorism the United States and Pakistan are working to repair a “huge trust deficit,” and Clinton acknowledged that because of the U.S. approach to the region during the former Soviet Union’s invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, “we had helped to create the problem we’re now fighting.”

It would be a mistake for the United States to walk away from Pakistan and Afghanistan again, Clinton said. There are “consequences we’re well aware of.”

The U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue is helping to build confidence and trust between the two countries that was previously lacking, the secretary told NBC’s Andrea Mitchell. The dialogue has sought to focus on areas of mutual interest such as governance, water, energy, health and jobs, as well as security, and Clinton said, “The constant exchanges of information between our military and civilian leaders with theirs has begun to build a level of candor that, frankly, was missing.”

As Pakistani officials debate whether their country can simultaneously fight al-Qaida and other groups, and possibly question the long-term commitment of the United States, Clinton said the Obama administration’s argument to them is “very simple” on the need to confront terrorism.

“You’ve got to take on every nongovernmental armed force inside your country, because even though you think they won’t bother you today, there’s no guarantee. It’s like keeping a poisonous snake in your backyard. You think, oh, it’ll only go after the stranger or the intruder. You don’t know whether tomorrow it’ll go after you,” she said.

The secretary said she is finding “greater receptivity” to that argument, but “we’re still having to really make it strongly.”

Clinton told the BBC’s Kim Ghattas that President Obama has changed the U.S. foreign policy approach to the region by directing U.S. officials to look at the interconnectedness between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The United States has also encouraged greater cooperation between the two countries and a decrease in the “historic mistrust” that has existed between their people and their leaders.

“We don’t see how you get a stable Afghanistan or a long-term outlook for stability in Pakistan if there is not some better coordination and cooperation between the two countries,” Clinton said. “And we are very much in the mindset that the more cooperation and the more that they begin to see a common future, particularly as against the destabilizing effects of the terrorist groups, the better it will be.”

3. Obama, Cameron Reaffirm Commitment to Afghanistan (07-20-2010)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — A key component for peace in Afghanistan is to build the country’s capacity so that its security forces “can take responsibility for their future,” President Obama said after meeting with British Prime Minister David Cameron at the White House.

At a joint press conference July 20, Obama and Cameron said they both agree that the right strategy is twofold: break the former Taliban regime's insurgency and build Afghan capacity.

Cameron, in his first visit as prime minister, said the American and British relationship is strong because it delivers for both nations, and because it is a partnership of choice. "To me, it is also an absolutely essential relationship if we're going to deliver the security and the prosperity that our people need," he said.

"On Afghanistan, there is no clearer, no more tangible illustration of Britain and America standing shoulder to shoulder in our national interest than this mission that we are engaged in together," Cameron said.

Obama and Cameron evaluated the current Afghanistan strategy and its progress, and reaffirmed their commitment to the mission. A critical part, essential for the transition to Afghan control, is preparing the Afghan National Army and police to provide security for their country.

The Afghan government presented plans July 20 at an international conference, representing 40 nations and 80 delegations, meeting in Kabul to implement President Hamid Karzai's commitment to improve national security, economic growth, governance and the delivery of basic services. The Karzai government also presented a peace and reconciliation plan to get the Taliban insurgents to lay down their arms, which Obama said the United States supports.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton led the U.S. delegation to the Kabul conference, after attending U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue meetings in Islamabad July 18-19.

According to Obama, the Kabul conference yielded an agreement for transitioning the security of Afghanistan's provinces to the control of Afghan security forces. And Afghanistan and Pakistan have agreed to increase economic opportunities on both sides of the border, signing the first trade agreement between the two countries in decades, he added.

"These are all important achievements, and they go a long way towards helping create the conditions needed for Afghans to assume greater responsibility for their country," Obama told reporters. The United States is planning to begin transitioning some of its military forces out of Afghanistan next year, as conditions permit, he said.

"This is not an easy fight, but it is a necessary one," Obama said. Terrorists trained in Afghanistan and the tribal regions along the Pakistani border have killed innocent civilians in the United States and Britain, he said. A wider insurgency in Afghanistan would mean a larger safe haven for al-Qaida and its affiliates to plan their next attacks.

Cameron said he and Obama also agreed during their meeting in the Oval Office on the need to reinvigorate the political strategy for Afghanistan. "Insurgencies tend not to be defeated by military means alone. There must also be political settlement," he said.

One part of the proposed reconciliation process is for Taliban insurgents to cut themselves off from the Taliban and al-Qaida and accept the Afghan constitution so they can have a future in a peaceful Afghanistan, Cameron said.

[Press Conference by Obama, British Prime Minister Cameron](#) - Discussion focused Afghanistan, Middle East and Iran's obligations

4. Remarks by Secretary Clinton on Intervention at Kabul Conference (07-20-2010)
U.S. to continue economic development assistance, training security forces

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton Intervention at Kabul Conference, Kabul, Afghanistan

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you very much, Minister Rassoul. And I am honored to join representatives from more than 70 countries and organizations to stand in strong support of a peaceful, prosperous, and stable Afghanistan. I want to thank President Karzai and the Afghan Government for hosting us today and for the months of preparation that were needed to make this conference a reality. And before I begin, I want to join the secretary general in congratulating the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan for the successful negotiation of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement earlier this week. This is the most significant achievement between these neighbors in nearly 50 years and it will go a long way towards strengthening regional economic ties, creating jobs, and promoting sustainable economic development – all of which are critical to the people of both countries.

Today's conference represents a milestone in a long and difficult journey. Here in Kabul, we are following Afghanistan's lead. The Afghan people and government have charted a comprehensive strategy for their future. Their plans are detailed, practical, and reflect a great deal of work and consultation. And we are here as representatives of individual nations and as members of the global community to offer our support and align our resources behind Afghan goals and Afghan policies.

Now, we know the road ahead will not be easy. Citizens of many nations represented here, including my own, wonder whether success is even possible, and if so, whether we all have the commitment to achieve it. Well, we will answer these questions with our actions. Today, we join in launching what the Afghan Government has termed "the Kabul process." It is a process that reflects a commitment to accountability, including clear benchmarks and milestones. And indeed, this conference is about accountability – accountability for the United States, for the United Nations, for members of the international community, and for the Afghan Government. We are called not only to voice support for the people of Afghanistan, but to honestly assess the progress we've made, identify the gaps between our expectations and our performance, and resolve to close those gaps together through patient, persistent efforts.

But it is important to note that we are making progress. Resources and personnel are flowing into the country, including almost 10,000 new international troops for ISAF. We are working around the clock to strengthen Afghanistan's security forces. With our Afghan partners, we are on the offensive in parts of the country where the insurgents have gone unchallenged for too long. And we are matching our military efforts with an unprecedented civilian surge to help create stronger institutions and economic development.

President Obama has said that we will begin a responsible, conditions-based transition to Afghan security leadership in July 2011. Toward this end, the Afghan Government, working with NATO, has developed a broad framework for the process that will help create conditions for transition, province by province, district by district, so the Afghan security forces can assume full responsibility for security in the transitioned areas.

Now, the July 2011 date captures both our sense of urgency and the strength of our resolve. The transition process is too important to push off indefinitely, but this date is the start of a new phase,

not the end of our involvement. We have no intention of abandoning our long-term mission of achieving the kind of Afghanistan that President Karzai set forth in his speech.

Too many nations, especially Afghanistan, have suffered too many losses to see this country slide backward. We intend to continue our economic development assistance and our support for training, equipping, and assisting the security forces of Afghanistan for a long time to come.

But our progress in the months and years ahead will largely depend on the people and Government of Afghanistan as well as the international community. So let me address the Afghan side of the partnership first.

The Afghan Government is stepping forward to deal with a multitude of difficult challenges, and I have to say some of their challenges have been made more difficult by the international community's intervention. And I think recognizing that and accepting the analysis that was present in President Karzai's address is very important. We are encouraged by much of what we see, particularly the work to improve governance. The government has created a new task force, new offices, and new legal tools to combat corruption. And President Karzai recently issued a decree prohibiting nepotism in government.

Now, these steps are important, but we know much more work remains. There are no shortcuts to fighting corruption and improving governance. On this front, both the Afghan people and the people of the international community expect results. As the government takes the steps it must to address this challenge, it can count on the United States for support.

We are also closely following the efforts to reintegrate insurgents who are ready for peace. There have been positive steps since last month's consultative peace jirga. President Karzai's decree establishing the Afghan peace and reintegration program has created a useful framework, but progress will depend on whether insurgents wish to be reintegrated and reconciled by renouncing violence and al-Qaida and agreeing to abide by the constitution and laws of Afghanistan.

I also want to emphasize the importance of President Karzai's recent statement that the rights of women, Afghan ethnic groups, and civil society will not be sacrificed in pursuit of reintegration and reconciliation. Over many years, I have observed and participated in post-conflict reconciliation efforts – in the Balkans, Northern Ireland, Africa, Latin America – and I speak from my own experience when I say that the work of Afghan women and civil society groups will be essential to this country's success. If these groups are fully empowered to help build a just and lasting peace, they will help do so. But if they are silenced and pushed to the margins of Afghan society, the prospects for peace and justice will be subverted.

Earlier today, I met with a number of Afghan women leaders who are doing heroic work to strengthen their communities and country, and I was privileged to announce several new programs that the United States will fund to support women and families by improving maternal and child health in pursuit of Afghanistan's desire to move closer to the Millennium Development Goal. We will double our support for the Ministry of Public Health's Community Midwifery Education Program and begin a new Community Nursing Education Program. And we will increase funding to programs that support gender equality in Afghanistan and an advocacy campaign to encourage religious leaders and influential members of communities across the country to encourage women and their families to access maternal health services.

I think that it is only fair for the international community to set forth its expectations, and the more we can speak with one voice, the less the confusion on the part of the Afghans themselves. And I

appreciate the recommendation that President Karzai made that we do even more to try to unify our actions so that there are not so many voices speaking at once about what should and must be done inside Afghanistan.

Because the international community bears responsibilities as well. As we look at the more than 70 nations and international organizations helping Afghanistan move forward, we have to recognize the invaluable work that the United Nations is performing in Afghanistan, NATO allies, ISAF partners – all making extraordinary sacrifices and financial contributions. There are more countries and international institutions here today than were at the Bonn conference eight years ago.

This is all cause for optimism, but we have to resolve to work more effectively together. And I think beginning to understand the importance of supporting sustainable democratic institutions inside Afghanistan is a big piece of that responsibility.

So this conference makes it clear the world is with Afghanistan and the world stands in opposition to the common threat and the common enemy that stalks us all. There will still be too many days when we wake up to news of violence, conflict, and loss of life. But we must not forget that not only are millions of Afghans working to lay the foundation for a better future, but tens of thousands of young men and women from across the world are as well. Some might carry a gun as part of the military forces, others might carry a notebook as those who are attempting to improve governance or work on education or health, but so many around the world are counting on the success of what we can achieve together here in Afghanistan.

History will hold us accountable for our efforts, and here today we must do the same for each other. President Obama and I look forward to working with the Afghan Government, the United Nations, and all of you in seeing this mission through to completion.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

5. [Clinton Announces Massive Aid for Pakistan's People \(07-19-2010\)](#)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton announced a series of U.S. commitments to projects in Pakistan aimed at improving agricultural development, electric power generation, dams, new hospital construction, and programs to help empower women.

Clinton told reporters following the U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue that the projects reaffirm the United States' long-term commitment to improve security, protect the Pakistani people, help drive economic development, and strengthen Pakistani democratic institutions. The assistance also is designed to help end a legacy of mistrust, she added.

Many of the new assistance projects are part of a previously approved \$7.5 billion in U.S. civilian aid spread over a five-year period that was announced by President Obama in 2009.

Under a three-year, \$28 million [Signature Health Program for Pakistan](#), the United States and Pakistan have consulted on Pakistan's National Health Policy, which outlines the priorities for the nation, including family planning, mother and child health, workforce development, and combating infectious diseases to meet the U.N. Millennium Development Goals. As part of the program, the United States will take on three projects to renovate and build medical facilities.

The United States will finance the design and construction of a 60-bed obstetrics and gynecology surgical ward and training institute for up to 150 medical students at the Karachi Jinnah Post Graduate Medical Center. The hospital currently handles more than 18,000 inpatients and 31,000 outpatients, more than 5,000 operations and 17,000 annual deliveries. And the United States will help renovate new wards, a midwifery school and doctor and nursing residential facilities at the Lahore Lady Willingdon Hospital, the largest maternity hospital in Pakistan.

Clinton also announced that the United States will provide technical management assistance and renovations to the Jacobabad Civil Hospital that serves a population of about 1 million people in northern Sindh and Balochistan.

WATER AND AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS

Clinton announced a multi-year [Signature Water Program](#) to improve the country's ability to efficiently manage its water resources and improve water distribution. The first phase of the program will cover seven projects costing more than \$270 million.

The projects included in this phase are: Jacobabad and Peshawar municipal water projects; municipal services delivery; Gomal Zam Dam irrigation project; Satpara Dam project; high-efficiency irrigation project; Balochistan water storage dams; and expert consultations.

The United States is providing \$21 million for projects supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) that will help [improve Pakistan's farm productivity and open new market opportunities](#), Clinton said. The first project supports a public-private partnership designed to improve the ability of women to manage rural dairy-related businesses and conduct business domestically and internationally.

The second project promotes the export by sea of Pakistan's mangos. USAID will support a three-year infrastructure program in partnership with leading mango farms in the southern Punjab and northern Sindh provinces to jointly finance infrastructure such as hot water treatment facilities, sorting and grading machines, blast chillers and cold storage facilities.

Clinton also announced several [government-to-government partnerships](#) with Pakistan that will strengthen cooperation in new information technologies, enhance mutual understanding between diplomats and support the preservation of Pakistan's national heritage. The projects range from data centers to citizen electronic services to historic archives preservation and other historic preservation efforts.

The United States also announced a series of programs to promote [private sector-led economic growth and job creation](#) that is part of the government economic-reform program. The programs will be administered by USAID, the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), the U.S. Commerce Department, and the U.S. Trade & Development Agency (TDA).

ENERGY PROGRAM

Clinton announced the [second phase of the Signature Energy Program](#) for Pakistan that will provide an additional \$60 million for seven projects that will be implemented by USAID, TDA, Commerce and the U.S. Geological Survey. Projects include power house and transmission components in South Waziristan; a dam project in Satpara; natural gas assistance; a smart grid and distribution modernization study; a biomass-fueled boiler feasibility study for the Bulleh Shah Paper Mill; a

study of the Gharol Corridor wind farm's feasibility; and a study to assess the technical, financial and economic feasibility of installing solar power systems in hundreds of private schools administered by the Beaconhouse Group and owned by Educational Services Limited, the largest private educational services company in Pakistan.

A new five-year, \$40 million [Gender Equity Program](#) to be funded by USAID is aimed at advancing women's rights and empowerment in Pakistan. The project will expand women's access to justice, help women exercise their rights in the workplace, the community and their homes, and combat gender-based violence.

Clinton also announced \$120 million for four programs to [help Pakistanis affected by conflict](#) to re-establish their lives in their home areas.

[U.S.-Pakistan Dialogue Focused on Pakistanis' Priorities](#)
[Secretary Clinton and Minister Qureshi Following Strategic Talks](#)
[Secretary Clinton's Town Hall Meeting in Islamabad, Pakistan](#)
[U.S. Gives Pakistan Priority Status for Excess Defense Articles](#)

6. U.S.-Israel Security Ties Advance Prospects for Regional Peace (07-16-2010)

United States expands longstanding commitment to Israel's security

Deepening U.S.-Israel Security Ties Advances Prospects for Comprehensive Peace

"Regional peace must begin with the recognition by every party that the United States will always stand behind Israel's security... no lasting peace will be possible unless that fact is accepted."

Secretary Of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, April 29, 2010

Under the Obama Administration, the United States has significantly expanded its longstanding commitment to Israel's security, ensuring that Israel has the means not only to defend itself against the full spectrum of complex security challenges it faces, but to ensure that Israel's legitimate security needs are met in ways that enable it to take the historic steps necessary to achieve a comprehensive regional peace.

- Israel is the leading beneficiary of U.S. security assistance funds for military training and equipment. This year, Congress fully funded the Obama Administration's \$2.775 billion security assistance request for Israel -- the largest security assistance request for Israel in U.S. history.
- Over the past year, the United States and Israel have expanded bilateral security consultations and cooperation on a wide range of shared security challenges, from counterterrorism and preventing illicit arms smuggling into Gaza to counter-proliferation.
- Israeli forces also benefit from joint exercises and training opportunities, access to advanced U.S. military hardware, emergency stockpiles, and free or discounted equipment.
- The United States has committed for more than 30 years to helping Israel maintain its qualitative military edge – defined in terms of Israel's ability to counter and defeat credible military threats from any individual state, coalition of states or non-state actors, while sustaining minimal damage or casualties. In 2008, this longstanding policy was written into law, and has since become the cornerstone of the U.S.-Israeli security relationship.

- The United States and Israel have long cooperated in research and development of defense systems. The Obama Administration is building on this partnership by asking Congress to approve \$205 million to support production of Israeli-developed short range rocket defense system called Iron Dome.
- As U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell has said, “American commitment and determination are essential to the preservation of a sovereign and secure Israel and to the peaceful and just resolution of the conflict in the Middle East. There is as elsewhere a universal human desire to lead lives that are full, free and meaningful.”

A transcript is available at <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/rm/144753.htm>, or you can watch at <http://www.state.gov/video/?videoid=129222649001>.

7. Reducing Security Threats Enhances Middle East Peace Prospects (07-16-2010)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — A nuclear-armed Iran would pose the greatest threat to regional security in the Middle East, says Assistant Secretary of State Andrew Shapiro.

“While the most grave, the Iranian nuclear program is one of many serious security threats in the region,” Shapiro added during a July 16 speech at the Brookings Institution, a Washington-based policy research center. Conventional arms can be — and often are — as dangerous and threatening as a nuclear device, he said.

“These conventional challenges intersect with the asymmetrical threats posed by Hezbollah and Hamas, whose rockets indiscriminately target Israeli population centers, and whose extensive arms-smuggling operations, many of which originate in Tehran and Damascus, weaken regional security and disrupt efforts to establish lasting peace between Israel and its neighbors,” Shapiro said.

“As Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has often said, the status quo is unsustainable. Without a comprehensive regional peace, the Middle East will never unlock its full potential, and Israel will never be fully secure,” Shapiro said.

“President Obama has also made achieving peace and recognized secure borders for Israel a top administration priority,” he said.

Shapiro, who is the assistant secretary for political-military affairs at the State Department, told the audience that for more than six decades Israelis have guarded their borders effectively. But with advances in technology, new levels of U.S.-Israeli security cooperation are required.

“Despite efforts at containment, rockets with better guidance systems, greater range and more destructive power are spreading across the region,” Shapiro said in his prepared remarks. He added that the terrorist groups Hezbollah to the north of Israel and Hamas to the south have amassed thousands of short-range and medium-range rockets, and while still crude, they pose a serious danger to civilian lives.

Shapiro said a secure Israel makes it easier to advance the peace process.

“This administration believes that pursuing peace between Israel and the Palestinians and Israel and its neighbors can be a mutually reinforcing process,” he said. “We are fully committed to Israel’s security because it enhances our own national security and because it helps Israel to take the steps necessary for peace.”

8. Clinton, Gates to Hold Talks with South Korean Officials (07-15-2010)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Defense Secretary Robert Gates will hold a full range of security and alliance talks with South Korean officials July 21 in Seoul.

Clinton will also attend the post-ministerial meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Hanoi, Vietnam, as well as bilateral talks with Vietnamese officials during a portion of the trip, [says Kurt Campbell](#), assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs. And in Hanoi, Clinton will join with Vietnamese officials in commemorating the 15th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Vietnam.

“There will be several events to underscore the importance of how far the United States and Vietnam have come in terms of our bilateral relationship and the prospects for closer coordination and cooperation in the future,” Campbell added.

After the ASEAN meeting, Clinton will join the foreign ministers of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam for their second meeting to discuss the [Lower Mekong Initiative](#), which is a program that bridges lessons learned from the Mississippi River in the United States and the Mekong River in Southeast Asia, Campbell said.

“We have some specific programs that we will announce that deal with issues associated with agriculture, climate change and sustainability on the Mekong,” Campbell said.

And Clinton is leading the U.S. delegation to the International Conference on Afghanistan in Kabul on July 20. Other stops may be included on the trip, but plans have not been completed.

The meetings with South Korean Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan and National Defense Minister Kim Tae-young are the first “2-plus-2” talks held between U.S. and South Korean ministers. “It is meant to signal the very real and long-standing strength of our alliance and to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War,” Campbell told reporters during a July 15 State Department press briefing. The range of the talks with Korean officials will include security issues in Northeast Asia, the U.S.-South Korean alliance and economic relations.

The sinking of the South Korean naval ship Cheonan in March by a North Korean submarine will also be discussed, Campbell said, and it will be discussed at the ASEAN meeting in Hanoi as well.

“We will be in deep consultations, not only Secretary Gates but Secretary Clinton, with our counterparts in terms of making sure that we’re very closely aligned in our strategy moving forward,” Campbell said. “The United States is considering a variety of options associated with North Korea.”

At a Pentagon briefing July 14, press secretary Geoff Morrell said that since the sinking of the Cheonan, the United States and South Korea have been engaged in high-level close consultations to devise additional ways to bolster alliance capabilities and improve regional stability. Combined military exercises will be discussed during the 2-plus-2 talks, "including new naval and air exercises in both the Sea of Japan and the Yellow Sea," he added.

These exercises will augment already planned exercises with elements of the U.S. and South Korean armed forces, Morrell said. "All of these exercises are defensive in nature, but will send a clear message of deterrence to North Korea and demonstrate our steadfast commitment to the defense of South Korea," he added.

U.S. and South Korean officials will also discuss a plan agreed to by President Obama and South Korean President Lee Myung-bak during the Group of 20 meeting in Toronto in June that will transfer wartime operational control of forces on the Korean Peninsula to South Korea by December 2015. The transfer had been scheduled for April 2012.
